

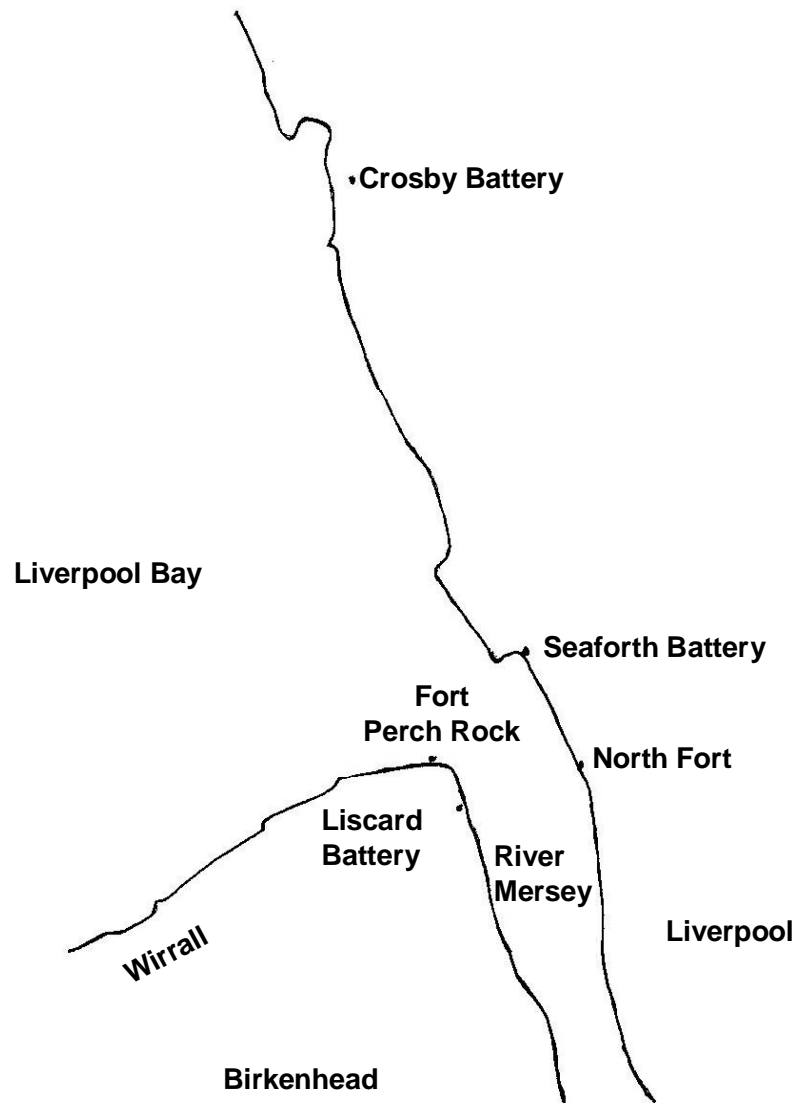
THE DEFENCES OF THE MERSEY

By Ian Stevenson

The river Mersey was one of the most important rivers in the country in Victorian times as along its northern side was the port of Liverpool through which passed the extensive trade with North America; on the southern side¹ was the port and manufacturing centre of Birkenhead with its shipbuilding yards. In the hinterland behind Liverpool was one of the major industrial centres of the country with the important manufacturing towns of Burnley, Bolton, Blackburn, Salford and Manchester, the latter linked to the Mersey by the Manchester Ship Canal in the later years of the nineteenth century. The dominant trade was cotton followed by coal.

At the time of the Norman conquest Liverpool was a small fishing community; its rise in importance started in the reign of King John² who required a port on the west coast in connection with his campaigns in North Wales and Ireland. In 1207 the King granted a charter to the town, and some thirty years later a castle was built. In time the castle became a royal one, through the Duchy of Lancaster, and it was eventually disposed of in 1718 to Liverpool Corporation who demolished it. The castle was a substantial one; it was square in plan with three round towers at its south-western, south-eastern and north-western corners; at the north-eastern corner was a square tower that was subsequently incorporated into a twin towered gatehouse which formed a separate unit to the remainder of the castle³.

Alongside the head of the Wirral peninsular was the main entrance channel into the port of Liverpool; after passing the peninsular vessels had to make a sharp turn to the east to enter the dock area and it was at this point there was a reef known as Black Rock that had to be avoided. The Liverpool Corporation erected a wooden marker at the site in 1683 to warn shipping of the hazard; because Black Rock was submerged at high tide the marker was frequently washed away. The marker eventually became known as the Perch and the rocky outcrop as Perch Rock. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars two batteries were built on the adjacent shoreline for a total of nine guns⁴; as was usual at the conclusion of any war the batteries were abandoned and the guns withdrawn. However in 1816 a plan had been drawn up for a battery to be built at Perch Rock for seven guns; the design for it was triangular in shape, with a semi-circular battery facing seawards and the rear closed by two towers with a defensible barrack in between; this formed the basis of the design for the fort that was eventually built there.



Site Plan of the Mersey Defences

Between 1821 and 1825 there was considerable correspondence between Liverpool Corporation and the Board of Ordnance about the erection of a lighthouse or a fort at Perch Rock incorporating a lighthouse; the outcome was that there should be a fort and a separate lighthouse marking the reef. The fort that was built was trapezoid in shape for fifteen guns with the gorge closed by two towers linked by a defensible barrack; it was designed by Captain Kitson of the Royal Engineers and was built between 1826 and 1829 at a cost of £26965 6s 8d. The guns that were mounted were sixteen 32 pdr S.B. and two 18 pdr S.B. these latter being placed internally, one in each tower. The nearby lighthouse was built between 1827 and 1830 at an approximate cost of £28000.

Eleven years after the fort was completed it was described as “of irregular construction built of stone and has all the conveniences suitable to a small garrison”. The fort at this time was armed with fourteen 32 pdr S.B. guns on the ramparts and a further two: one on the top of each tower; all the guns were on cast iron traversing platform carriages twelve of which were front pivot, two were rear pivot and those on the top of each tower were centre pivot. There was an 18 pdr S.B. mounted inside each of the towers. However, it was noted that:-

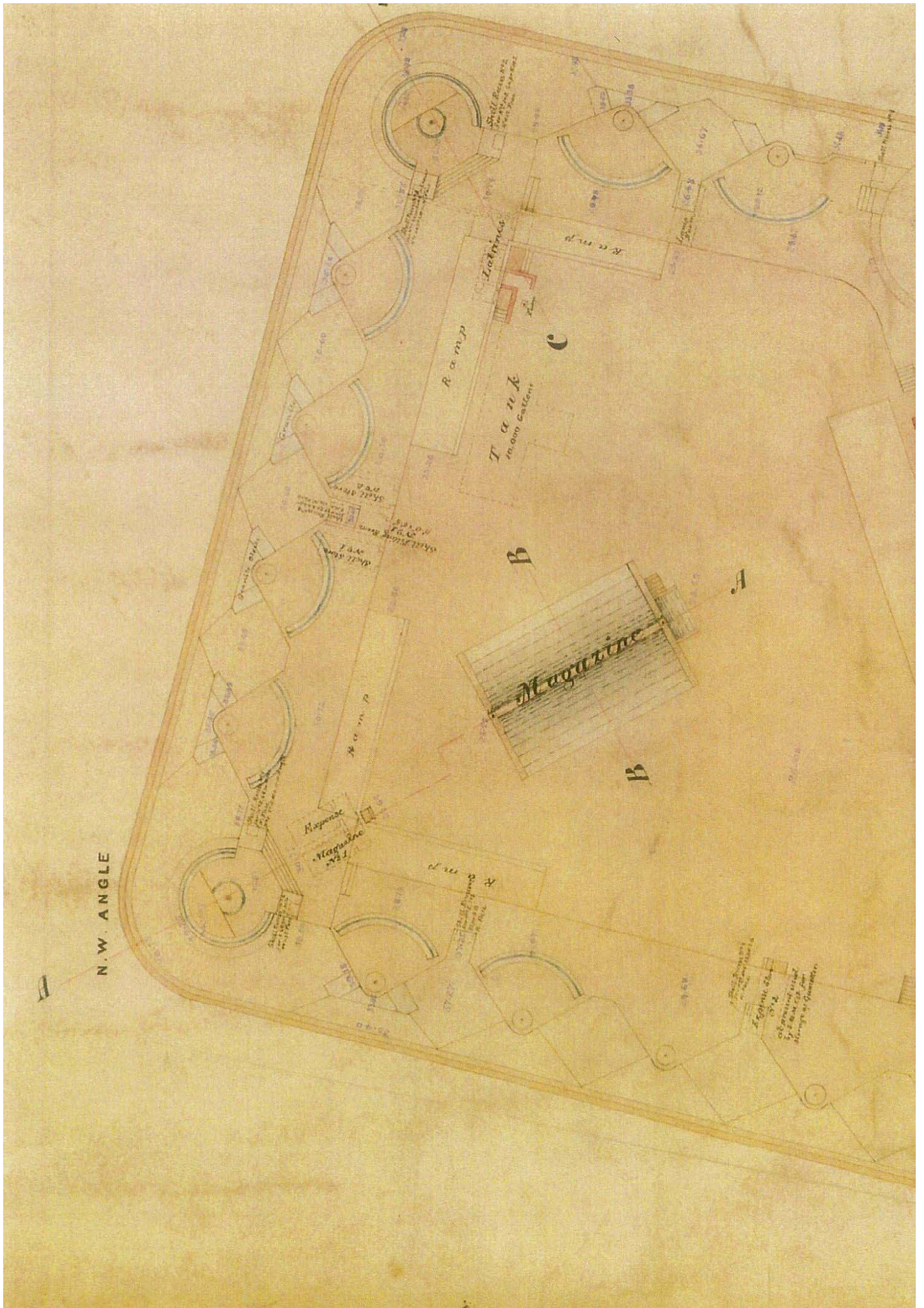
“The stone platforms are beginning to wear away on the line on which the traversing platform trucks move; it is desirable therefore to preserve efficiency and for economy that iron rails should be let into the stone platforms for the traversing trucks to work on”.

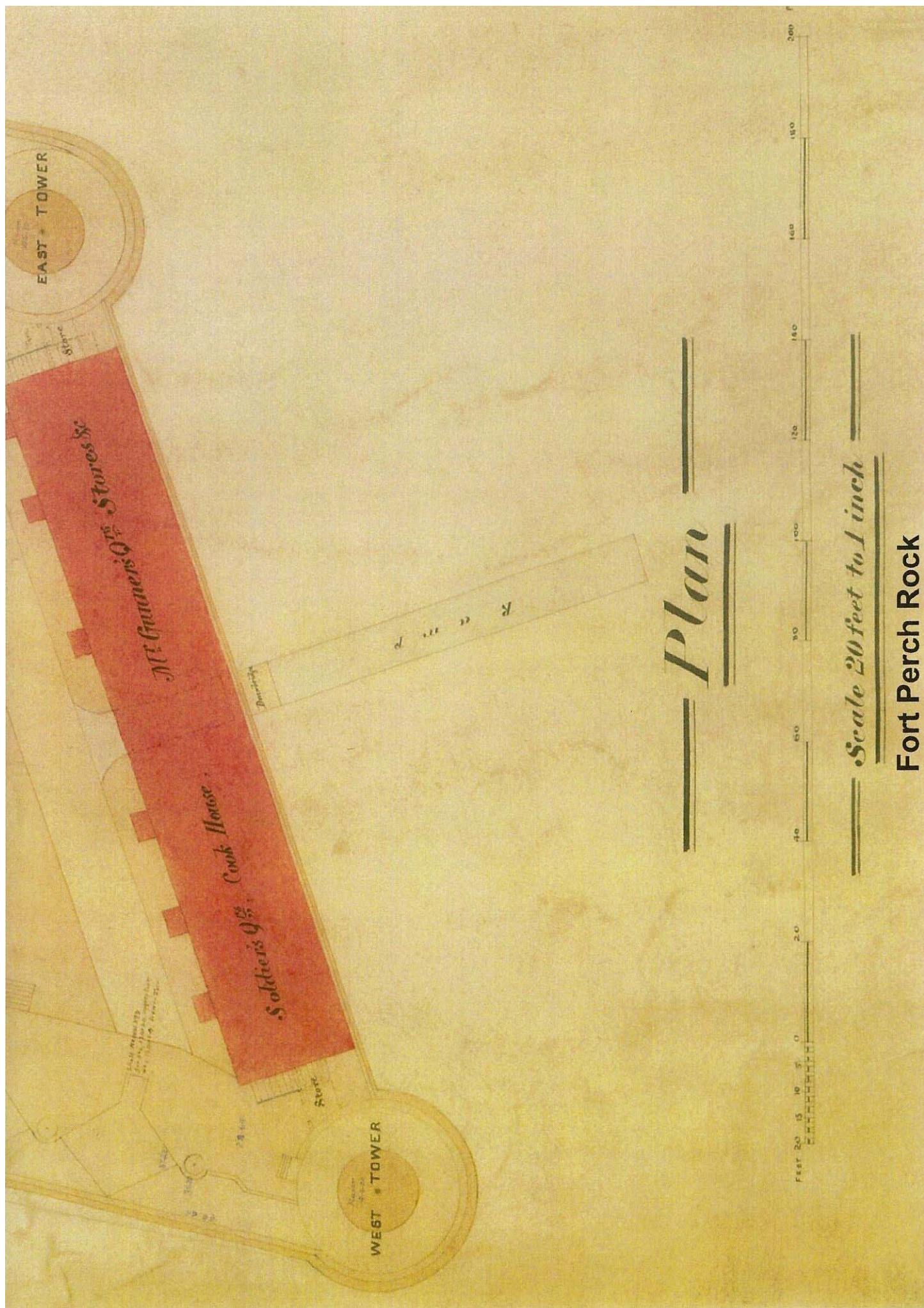
Although the fort was described as having all the conveniences suitable to a small garrison it was found that the casemated accommodation was “very damp, the moisture staining and running down the walls”. The casemates had been covered in asphalt that had now cracked and was breaking off which all contributed to the dampness of the rooms beneath. The garrison consisted of a master gunner and eight invalids.

On the Liverpool side of the river during the Napoleonic War a total of twenty guns⁵ were mounted in a number of batteries that were disarmed and abandoned after 1815 except one that remained until 1841; it was called the North Battery and was described shortly before its demolition as being:-

“a demi fieldwork with two faces towards the river Mersey and enclosed in the rear with a loopholed brick wall having a salient angle with a barbette Battery for two field pieces. It is constructed for thirteen 32 pdrs on traversing platforms. Its object is to defend the river Mersey with the town docks and shipping from an attack by sea but it is completely masked by the extension of the new docks and buildings; it is in a very good state of repair.

“In consequence of the extent of the river wall and establishments erected on it in front of this battery it has been judged no longer expedient to maintain its armament and works, and negotiations have been carried on between the Board of Ordnance and the Liverpool authorities for the erection of a new Battery at the extremity of the intended improvements of the harbour which are now in progress.”





Twelve of the guns were mounted on front pivot iron traversing platform carriages and the other on a rear pivot. The problem with defending the Liverpool side of the river was the continuous expansion of the docks. There was continuous correspondence between the Corporation, as the docks authority, and the Board of Ordnance about the need for defences for both the river and the docks. By the time the Board had decided on the position of a proposed battery the site had been taken by the docks authority who then did not want defence works encroaching on their land. A site was eventually agreed upon a mile up river from Fort Perch Rock for the construction of North Fort; it was built between 1852 and 1854 for fourteen guns⁶ with a hospital, a magazine and store buildings; on the landward side were two towers with a barrack for 250 men, in between closing the gorge.

Just as the construction of North Fort was completed in 1854 a report was made on the defences of the river; these consisted of Fort Perch Rock and North Fort so that once these were passed there was nothing to stop a commerce raider or privateers from bombarding or attacking the docks and industrial buildings on either side of the river. To counter this, it was proposed to build six batteries up river from North Fort along the Liverpool side of the river; these would be at suitable places along the dock walls commanding the river and mounting between four and six guns each. Also on the Liverpool side there was to be a defensible work for seventeen guns with a garrison of 100 men opposite Fort Perch Rock so that the main channel up river could be covered from both sides. The estimated cost was put at £10,000. On the south side of the river in the area of the Liscard Magazines⁷ there was to be a battery for four guns.

The next year official approval was given for the construction of the battery at Liscard, the battery opposite Fort Perch Rock⁸, and for one of the six batteries up river from North Fort; in the event this latter work was never built as indeed were none of the other proposed batteries. Liscard Battery was built between 1856 and 1858 and mounted seven ten inch S.B. guns.

The trade of Liverpool was put at eight million tons exclusive of coal in 1861 and the docks were formed "in advance of the ordinary foreshore and extending for a distance of about five miles, and affording nearly fourteen miles of wharfage". By 1875 the estimated value of its trade was £160,000,000, the docks occupied an area of 255½ acres with quay accommodation of 18¼ miles. On the southern side of the river at Birkenhead the docks had an area of 195 acres with 9½ miles of quay accommodation. However at the end of that year the Inspector-General of Fortifications wrote:-

"I lately visited Liverpool, and to my utter dismay found that it is at present totally unprotected by any defences capable of keeping a small cruiser out of effective range of the docks, or of preventing a small ironclad from steaming into the river, when the town of Liverpool, and all its shipping being at its mercy, a calamity which would be nothing less than national, might be inflicted.

“The present condition of Liverpool is due to the existing defences not having been remodelled since the introduction of rifled artillery into warfare; and to the fact that the docks have been extended beyond the batteries constructed for their protection on the north bank of the river.

“A battery is now in course of construction at an expense of £60,000 at the western end of the docks but this alone, or even supported by submarine mines would be insufficient for the defence of the river; added to which the employment of these mines in the Mersey is attended with much difficulty in consequence of the great rise and fall of the tide, and the rapidity of the current.”

The battery referred to was Seaforth, which was opposite Fort Perch Rock. At the time of the Inspector-General's visit, the foundations for it were being laid; initially it was to have had ten ten inch RML guns but this was amended to four 12.5 inch RMLs before the main construction work on the battery had started. Seaforth Battery was completed in November 1879 at a cost of £19109 6s 8d.

The defences of Liverpool were considered in 1882 by Lord Morley's Committee in their review of the defences of the commercial ports of Great Britain. At this time the outer defences were Fort Perch Rock and Seaforth Battery which was described as “a formidable work of iron and granite, mounting four 38 ton guns behind iron shields of unusual dimensions”. It was proposed that the Battery should be closed at the rear and a barrack be provided for the garrison. Fort Perch Rock was to be remodelled for four 10.4 inch RBL guns. The inner defences were Liscard Battery and North Fort which were some 1800 yards up river from the outer ones. The Committee proposed that both works be remodelled to receive two 10 inch RML guns each, with their heavier armament these would be in a better position to co-operate more effectively with the guns in the outer line. Because of the size and extent of the docks the existing defences could not prevent long-range bombardment of the docks nor an attack by warships passing through the defences on a strong tide. To prevent this it was recommended that a battery be built at Crosby Point for three 10.4 inch RBL and two medium guns with another battery to the west of Fort Perch Rock at Leasowe with a similar armament. To support the artillery defences there were to be submarine mines, four gunboats, four torpedo boats and a defence vessel; these were required because of the “peculiar nature of the tides and conformation of the coast lines in the Mersey, shore batteries by themselves cannot be relied upon to stop a determined enemy”. The cost of the committee's recommendations were:-

Works	£139340
Guns	£63200
Submarine Mines	£8000
Floating Defences (Warships)	£276400
Total	<u>£486940</u>

At the time of Lord Morley's Report Fort Perch Rock was armed with:-

2 – 18 pdr SB
7 – 32 pdr SB
5 – 68 pdr SB
2 – 10 inch SBBL
1 – 7 inch RBL
1 – 64 pdr RML (58 cwt)

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Also at the time the main channel into the port was changing to the Crosby one⁹ as the Rock Channel was gradually silting up.

The recommendations made in Lord Morley's Report were passed to the Inspector-General of Fortifications for consideration; as far as the Mersey defences were concerned he had his own opinion thereon but did agree with some of the Report's conclusions; he did agree that the main line of defence should be that between Fort Perch Rock and Seaforth Battery, at the latter the magazines should be strengthened. As far as Fort Perch Rock was concerned it was to be re-armed with two 10 inch and two 8 inch B.L. guns. Between the two works there should be a minefield covered by machine guns and Q.F. guns. North Fort and Liscard Battery were considered to be too far up river to afford any protection to the docks. Liscard Battery was to be retained as a submarine mining station whilst North Fort was to be disarmed and the site returned to the docks board. As the main navigable channel was now the Crosby one the Inspector-General agreed that there should be a battery at Crosby Point armed with three ten inch and two six inch BL guns with a minefield in the channel. Because the Rock Channel could not take large vessels there was no need for a work at Leasowe; if defences were required in that area they could be improvised and mobile artillery used; the Rock Channel could be mined if necessary. The cost of the Inspector-General's proposals was:-

Works	£97000
Guns	£33000
Submarine Mines	£42000
	<u>£172000</u>

Between 1884 and 1887 North Fort was disarmed and the site surrendered to the dock board; the fort is not referred to in any official papers after 1887.

Board of Trade returns for Liverpool in 1882 recorded that the tonnage of vessels entering the port and clearing it was 15,402,351 tons; tonnage of ships built was 36934 tons and the value of imports and exports clearing the port was £215,259,867; this made Liverpool second to London for tonnage entering and clearing the port and for the value of imports and exports¹⁰.

The next report on the Mersey defences was made by the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers Works Committee in December 1887. Seaforth Battery was described as “a formidable work”, however the magazines still required additional protection, the thickness of the armoured shields needed to be increased by the addition of another plate and lastly a loopholed wall was required to close the rear of the Battery. There was a suggestion that the river be defended by Brennan torpedos based at the Battery and that this required two machine guns to cover the installation. The committee agreed that a work was required at Crosby Point with two 9.2 inch and two six inch BL guns on disappearing mountings together with two machine guns. Fort Perch Rock was to be remodelled for two heavy QF guns, two machine guns and a searchlight installation. Approximately a mile to the west of the Fort there was to be a new work for four six inch guns on disappearing mountings. Two minefields were required one at Crosby Point and the other at Leasowe closing the Rock channel. The Committee considered Liscard Battery to be obsolete and noted that it was surrounded by houses and recommended that it be disarmed and returned to the local authority; its armament at this time was still seven ten inch SB guns¹¹. The Committee similar to Lord Morley’s report favoured gunboats and torpedo boats to support the shore defences. In the Committee’s report the armament at Fort Perch Rock is shown as follows:-

Both Towers:	1 - 32 pdr S.B. (roof)	} each
	1 - 18 pdr S.B. (interior)	
East Face:	2 - 64 pdr RML	
N.E. Angle:	1 - 64 pdr RML	
North Face:	4 - 64 pdr RML	
N.W. Angle:	1 - 7 inch RBL	
West Face:	1 - 64 pdr RML	
	3 - 32 pdr S.B.	
	2 positions vacant	

The authorities decided that the heavy QF. Guns for Fort Perch Rock should be 4.7 inch calibre. In 1893 there were a number of changes proposed to the Mersey defences and these were considered the next year by the Joint Naval and Military Committee who were considering a comprehensive system for the coast defences at all naval bases, protected anchorages and commercial ports. The Committee described Liverpool as:

“Next to London, commercially the most important town of the British Empire, and the port to which the greatest amount of the food supply of England is carried. In 1892 its combined exports and imports amounted in value to nearly £213,000,000. It possesses very extensive and constantly increasing dock and basin accommodation, and has acquired still greater importance by the completion of the Manchester Ship Canal”.

Because of the silting up of the Rock Channel the Committee decided that there was no need for the battery for four six inch guns to the west of Fort Perch Rock; instead three of the six inch guns were to be mounted in the Fort on hydropneumatic mountings in place of the 4.7 inch QF guns which were to be transferred to Seaforth Battery. There were also to be two searchlights at the Fort. The Committee decided that the proposed battery at Crosby Point was unnecessary due to the expense of its construction, instead three 9.2 inch guns were to be mounted at Seaforth Battery; two were to be mounted in separate emplacements on hydropneumatic mountings on the right flank of the Battery whilst the other gun was to be mounted in the right casemated position replacing the existing 12.5 inch R.M.L. The remaining 12.5 inch RMLs were to remain and the two 4.7 inch QF guns were to be mounted on top of the casemates. The cost of these proposals was:-

Seaforth Battery

Provision of 3 – 9.2 inch and 2 – 4.7 inch QF guns	£49850
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Fort Perch Rock

Provision of 3 – 6 inch guns	£12450
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Provision of 2 searchlights	£1600
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<u>£63900</u>

In preparation for the installation of the 4.7 inch QF guns all the obsolescent armament at Fort Perch Rock was removed in March 1893, this amounted to:-

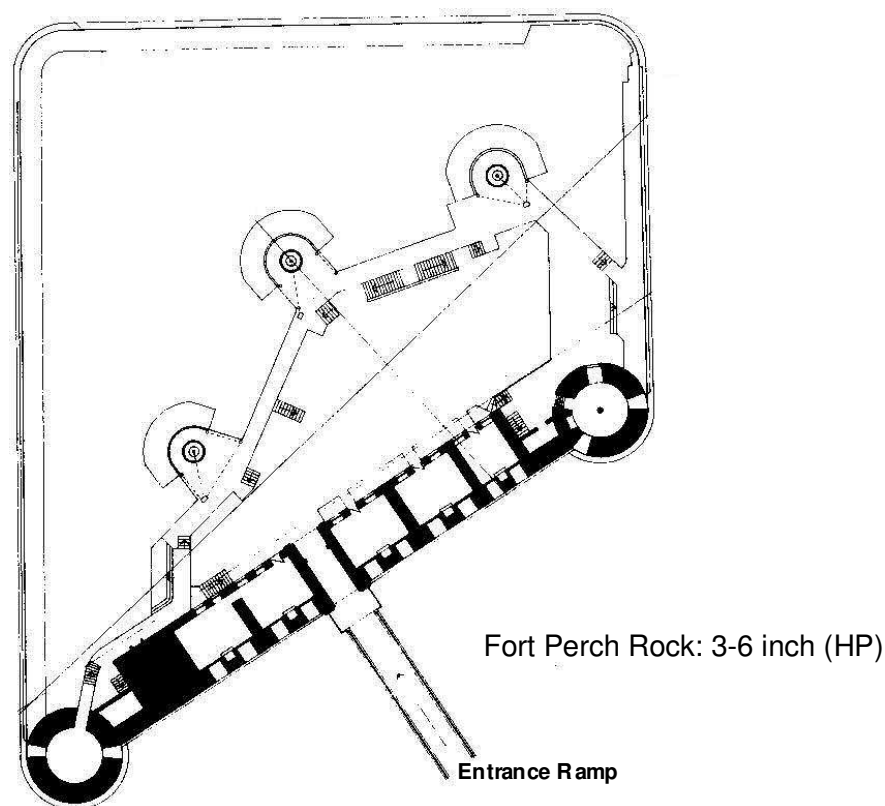
3 – 32 pdr S.B.

1 – 7 inch R.B.L.

8 – 64 pdr R.M.L

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A year later the 4.7 inch guns and their mountings arrived at the Fort then came the decision to transfer them to Seaforth Battery. The result was that the Fort was unarmed between March 1893 and 1898 except for two machine guns. From October 1894 to October 1896 the Fort was reconstructed to take the three six inch guns. The guns arrived at the Fort in December 1893 whilst two of the hydropneumatic mountings arrived in May the next year. The third mounting arrived in January 1899 and the last gun was mounted in that month. The Fort was finally operational in March 1899 after the testing of the last mounting. The 4.7 inch QF. Guns were mounted at Seaforth Battery on the top of the casemates at much the same time as by 1898 the guns are shown as mounted in an armament return of that year.



Having got all the new guns in place the defences were reviewed in 1899 by a conference on Armaments which was considering the defences of ports and naval bases throughout the British Empire¹². It was decided that 9.2 inch guns were unnecessary for the Mersey as attacking warships would have to pass the defences in a single line for which QF guns would be better able to engage them at such close ranges; instead it was suggested that two or three six inch guns should be placed at Crosby Point¹³. At Fort Perch Rock the three 6 inch Mark VI guns on hydropneumatic mountings should be replaced with Mark VII guns on central pivot mountings Seaforth Battery was to remain with its existing armament. The defences of the Mersey had at last achieved the outline of their final armament.

Before any of the proposed changes could be implemented, the Owen Committee made its report in 1905 and with one exception approved the recommendations made in 1899. The Committee set out the importance of the Mersey:-

“The port of Liverpool is to a great extent protected by its retired position in the Irish Channel which can only be reached through seas in which the presence of a hostile ship would soon be detected. At the same time, in view of the importance of the port and the extensive area covered by the docks it is considered that it should be protected by a greater measure of

defence against class 'C' attack¹⁴ than has been recommended in the case of other purely commercial ports".

The last sentence is interesting in view of the defences that the Committee deemed sufficient for the River Tyne; four six inch guns in two batteries. If ever there was a case of providing more defence at a 'C' class port than was strictly necessary it was the Tyne¹⁵. The one point on which the Committee disagreed with the 1899 recommendations was the retention at Seaforth Battery of the four muzzle loading guns. The Committee considered that they were valueless and should be removed. Four searchlights were to be provided for the defences two at Fort Perch Rock and two at Seaforth Battery, either in it or nearby.

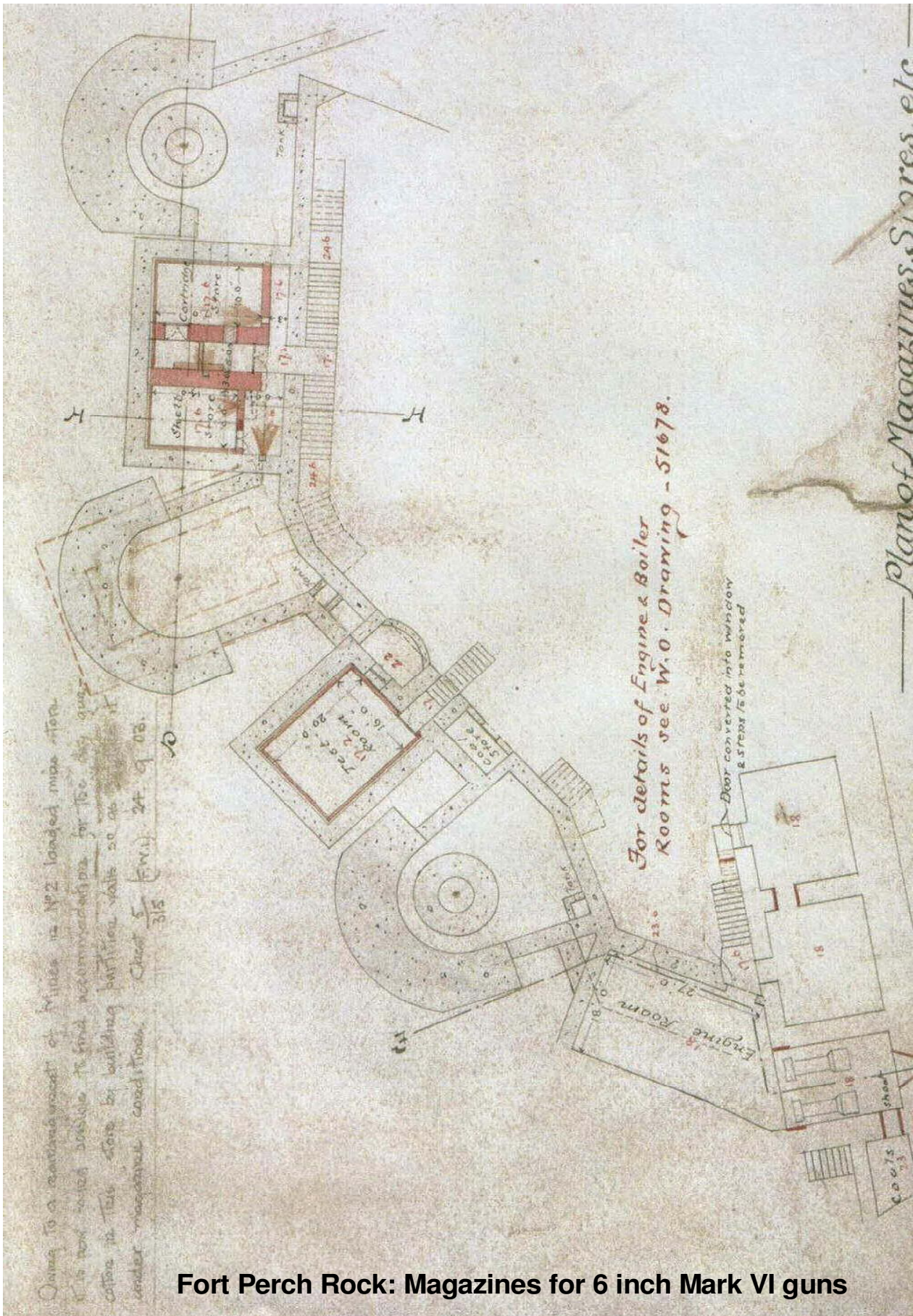
The battery at Crosby Point was built between March 1906 and October 1907 for three Mark VII six inch BL guns at a cost of £15824 13s 1d; needless to say it was called Crosby Battery. Two years latter in June 1909 work started at Fort Perch Rock to remodel it to take three Mark VII six inch guns; the work was completed in October 1910 at a cost of £3841. In 1903 the four 12.5 inch RML guns at Seaforth Battery were dismounted though it appears that it took some time for the barrels to be removed from the site. The positions vacated by the No 1 and No 4 guns were later converted into searchlight positions.

The inspection reports of the Inspector-General of the Royal Garrison Artillery (R.G.A.) in the early years of the twentieth century give an insight into the manning and efficiency of the coast defences. The Mersey Defences were manned by volunteers with a small district establishment of the Royal Garrison Artillery who constituted the regular army element of the defences and who trained the volunteers and looked after the guns, ammunition and stores. In 1905 the district establishment numbered 32 men¹⁶. The same applied to the Royal Engineers where there was a small regular detachment which maintained the equipment whilst the volunteers made up the rest of the two Royal Engineer formations. The units that manned the artillery were:-

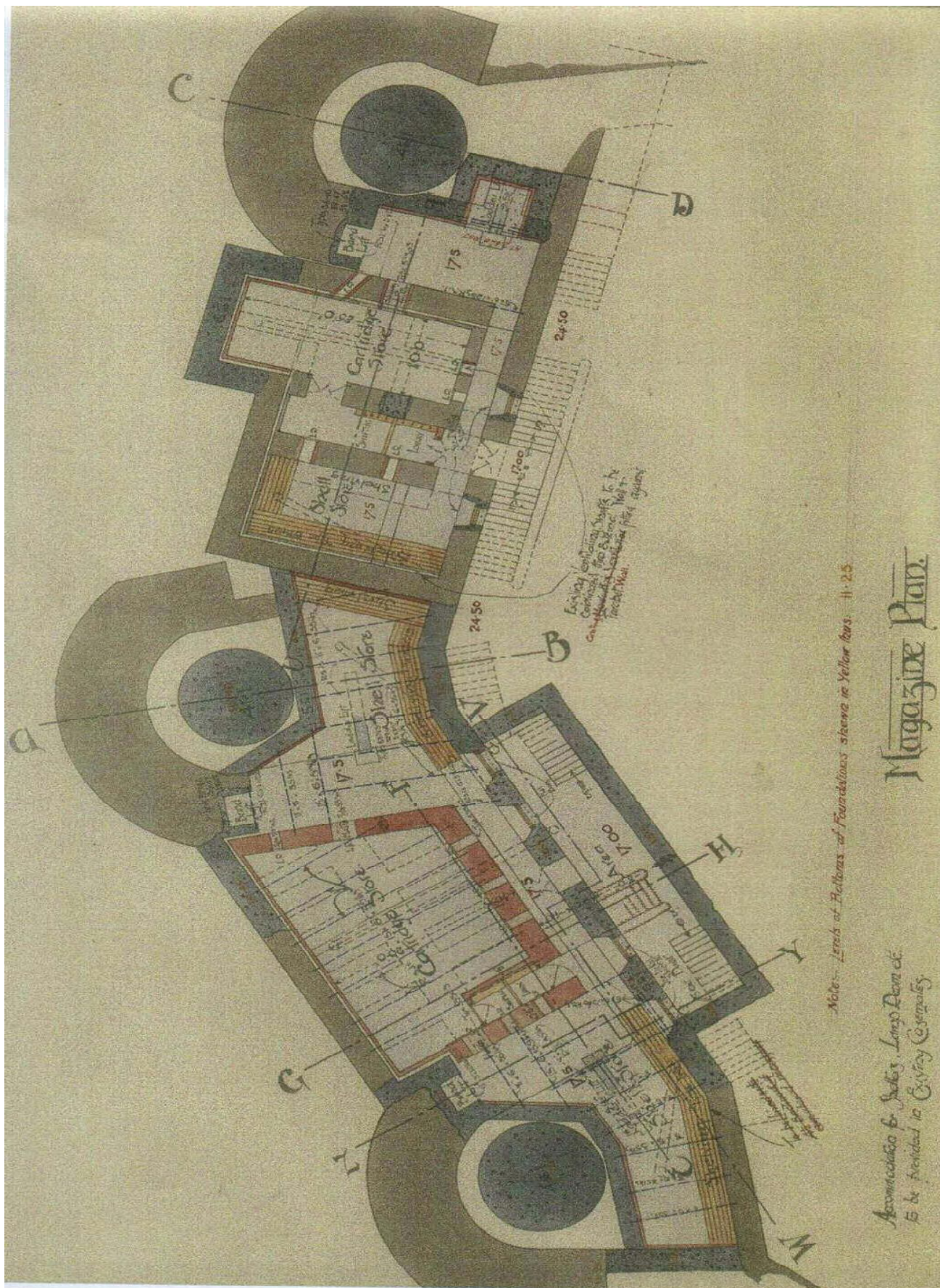
1st Lancashire R.G.A. (Volunteers) - 12 officers and 308 men (nominal war strength)
1st Cheshire R.G.A. (Volunteers) – 7 officers and 212 men (nominal war strength)

The Inspector-General from 1906 to 1909 was Major-General Dalton.

The inspection of the defences in May 1906 the district establishment was found efficient and the batteries together with their related equipment were kept in good order and were fit for service. The inspection revealed some unusual methods of communication between the various elements of the defences; there was no direct communication between the Port War Signal Station, the Formby Lightship, and the examination battery, which was Seaforth Battery, except through the Formby Post Office; the General commented that during "peace mobilisations the Post Office at Formby seems to find it inconvenient to pass on the messages".



Fort Perch Rock: Magazines for 6 inch Mark VI guns



Fort Perch Rock: Magazines for 6 inch Mark VII guns

There was clearly a need for something more practical and reliable. The switchboard for the Fortress Commander was in the Town Hall, this was unsatisfactory and it should be moved to his post "the sooner the better". The General believed that a Fire Commander should be appointed to control the fire of three widely dispersed batteries instead of relying on the battery commanders acting independently "which might result in injudicious expenditure of ammunition without adequate result". On the reorganisation of the defences as proposed by the Owen Report the General was in agreement especially regarding the searchlights to the south of Seaforth Battery which he considered useless, they should be either in the battery or just outside it to the north.

The report on the inspection of the defences the next year found that the district establishment was "entirely efficient", the armament and stores in their charge were "well kept". The need for a fire commander was re-iterated with a suggestion that he be at Crosby Battery which was where the Port War Signal Station was to be built. The report gives details about the condition of the various works: Crosby Battery was approaching completion and it was hoped that the guns and their equipment would arrive before the contractor took up the railway track to the site; the 12.5 inch RMLs had been dismantled at Seaforth battery, and sold to contractors, it was "hoped that someone¹⁷ will take away the guns soon". Fort Perch Rock was awaiting reconstruction.

On the creation of the Territorial Force (Army) under Lord Haldane's army reforms of 1908 the Volunteers who manned the Mersey defences were transferred into it and became 1 Heavy Battery West Lancashire Royal Garrison Artillery T.F. and the Lancashire and Cheshire Royal Garrison Artillery T.F.; the units had a nominal war strength of 12 officers and 308 men and 7 officers and 212 men respectively. The Royal Engineer units were similarly transferred into the Territorial Force.

The report on the 1908 inspection revealed that a fire commander had been authorised and the Port War Signal Station was to be at Crosby Battery when it was completed. The guns and their mountings were at the Battery which was drying out, the magazines and shelters beneath the gun positions were damp. No progress had been made at Fort Perch Rock on replacing the guns there. The men of the district establishment were found to be efficient and well commanded.

The 1909 inspection report showed that matters had considerably improved. The fire commander was to be based at Seaforth Battery but could also be based at Crosby Battery if required. The district establishment was two officers and fifty-three other ranks, the general was quite "satisfied with the appearance and efficiency of the men generally which reflects credit on the district officer who commands them". The guns had been mounted at Crosby Battery and had been practiced with, the dampness reported the previous year had gone; the General noted that the "battery has made great strides since last year and promises to be very satisfactory". Work had started at Fort Perch Rock to alter the emplacements for the Mark VII six inch guns which it

was hoped would be mounted the next year. At Seaforth Battery it was found that:-

“The 12.5 inch guns in this fort which has been sold are still lying there and delay the work of proceeding with the alteration of two of the casemates as accommodation for men. One gun is being broken up by the purchaser by drilling holes, a slow process”.

The two searchlights at the battery were ready and work was in hand for the other two at Fort Perch Rock.

At the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 the Mersey defences consisted of:-

Crosby Battery:	3 – 6 inch Mark VII B.L. guns
Seaforth Battery:	2 – 4.7 inch Q.F. guns and 2 searchlights
Fort Perch Rock:	3 – 6 inch Mark VII B.L. guns and 2 searchlights

Early in the war Fort Perch Rock and Seaforth Battery each received a 6 pdr Nordenfeld Q.F. gun to assist with the examination service; they were eventually withdrawn by 1923. In 1916 two six inch guns were withdrawn from both Crosby Battery and Fort Perch Rock; however in November 1923 a six inch Mark VII was returned to Fort Perch Rock and probably also to Crosby Battery.

There was a review of the coast defences in 1928 when it was decided that Seaforth Battery was not required; the guns were dismounted and all the equipment and stores were removed; in March 1929 the Battery was handed over to the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board who soon afterwards completely demolished it. The reason was the same as for the previous batteries on the Liverpool shore, the expansion of the docks rendered it useless and the docks authority required the land.

A small change occurred at Fort Perch Rock when the six inch gun in the centre emplacement was transferred into the left hand or No 3 position in June 1931 leaving the centre position vacant.

The three gun positions at Crosby Battery were rebuilt in 1932 to take guns on Mark V mountings (45°) but the two guns remained mounted on Mark II central pivot ones although some armament returns indicate that the Battery would receive the new mountings and the new gun that went with them.

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939 the Mersey defences were:-

Fort Perch Rock:	2 – 6 inch Mark VII B.L. guns and 4 searchlights
Crosby Battery:	2 – 6 inch Mark VII B.L. guns and 4 searchlights

This armament remained in place throughout the war and until both batteries were finally disarmed and disposal of by the Ministry of Defence. Crosby

Battery was one of those selected to receive three 5.25 inch combined anti-aircraft and coast defence guns; although the positions were selected and plans were drawn up the guns were never mounted. The Battery did receive a four inch naval gun that was mounted on the right flank; it was primarily a naval practice gun that could be brought into the defences if required but it was not part of the approved armament; from June 1944 until the end of the war it was relegated to practice status and was removed when the war ended. Crosby Battery was the examination battery and was manned by regular army personnel throughout the war. Fort Perch Rock from 1943 onwards was increasingly manned by the Home Guard to release regular army personnel for other duties; after November 1945 the Fort was reduced to care and maintenance.

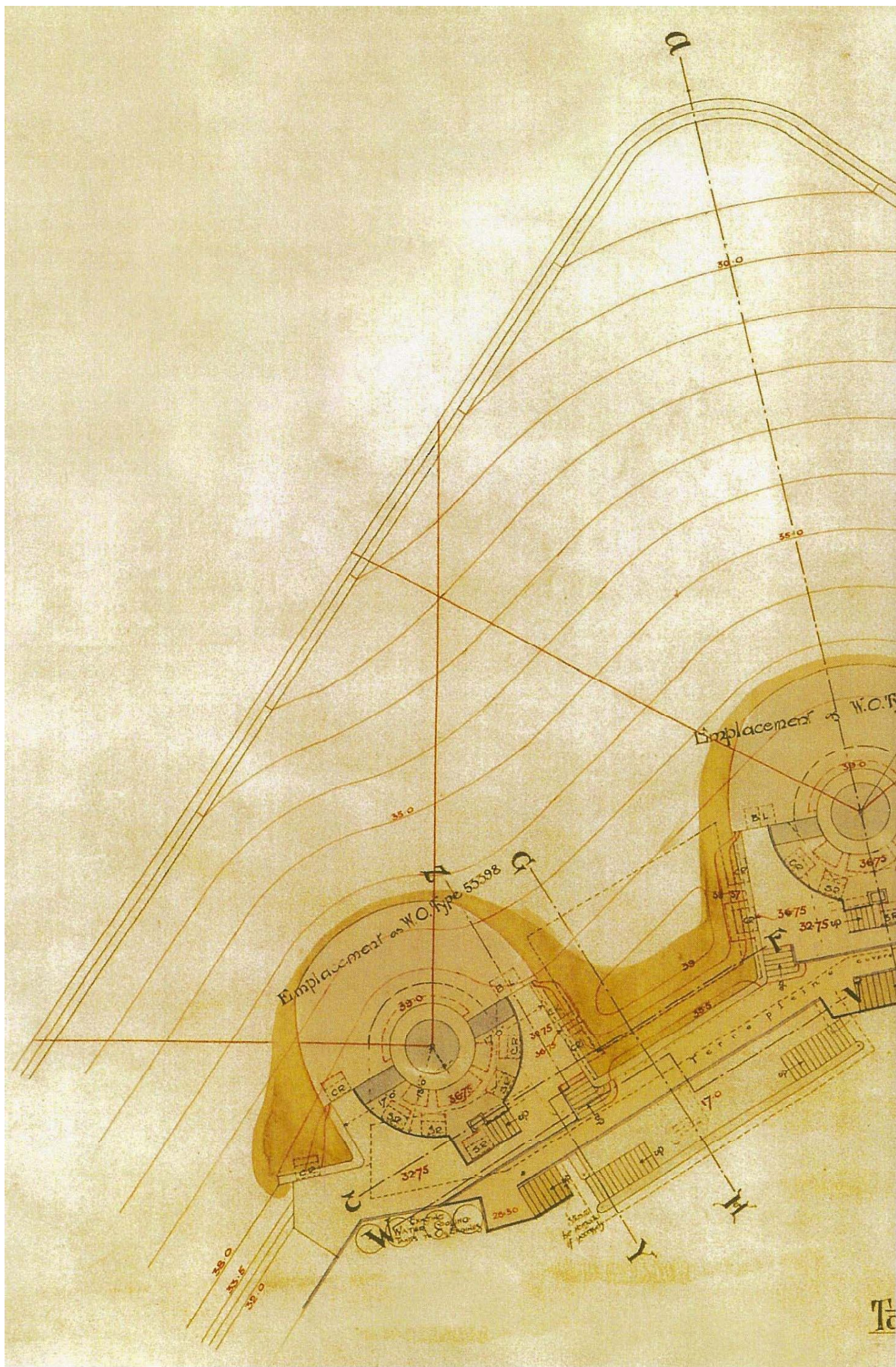
It is presumed that Crosby Battery was reduced to care and maintenance after the war finished; thereafter its fate was similar to Seaforth Battery in that it was disarmed, dismantled and the site handed over to the Docks Board who demolished it. Regrettably records are a little reticent about this.

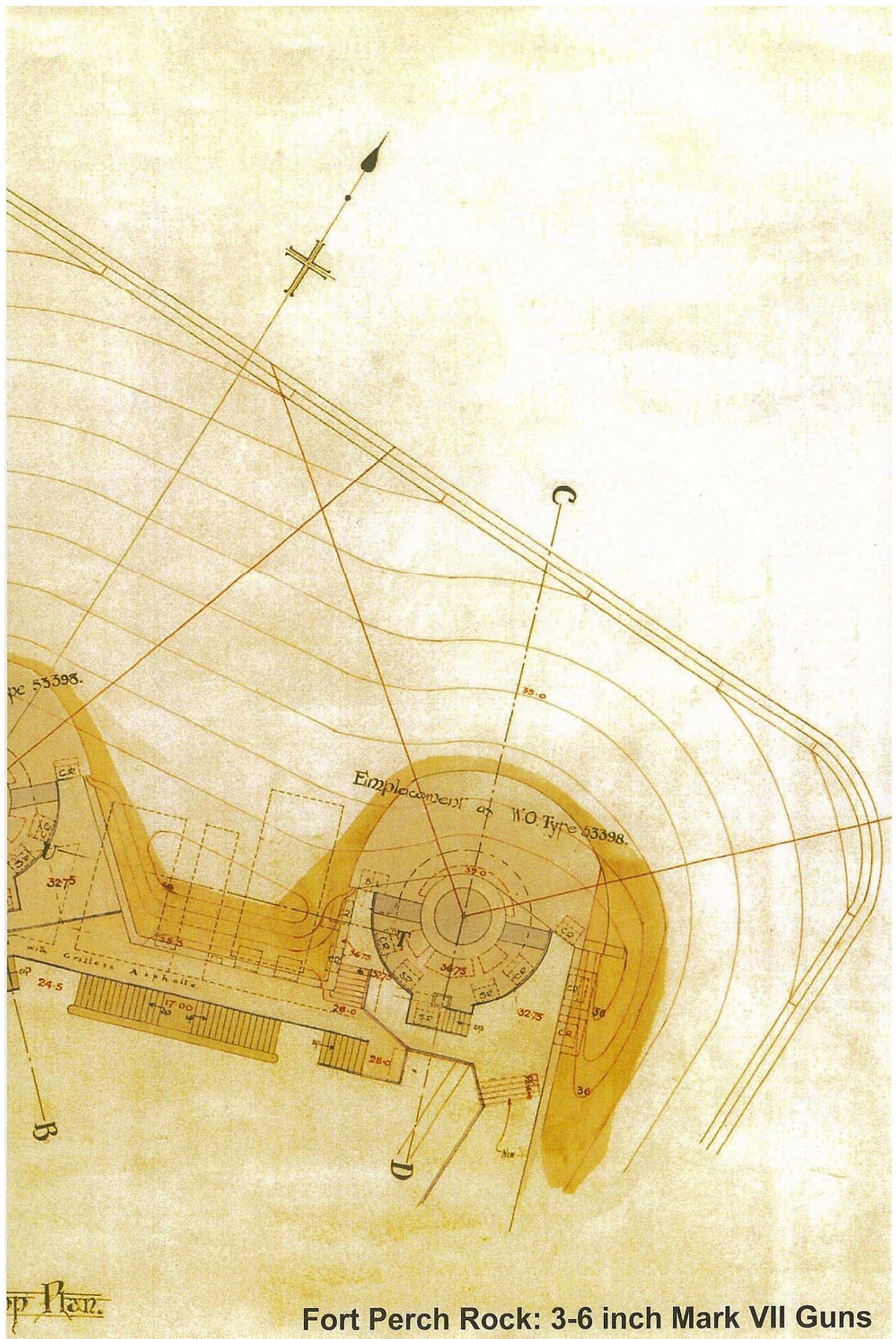
Fort Perch Rock was disarmed in 1954 and sold at auction by the Ministry of Defence four years later. There followed a period of unsympathetic use when the fort was vandalised and plundered, until 1976 when it was purchased by an architect the late Mr Norman Kingham¹⁸; under his guidance the fort was restored to its present condition.

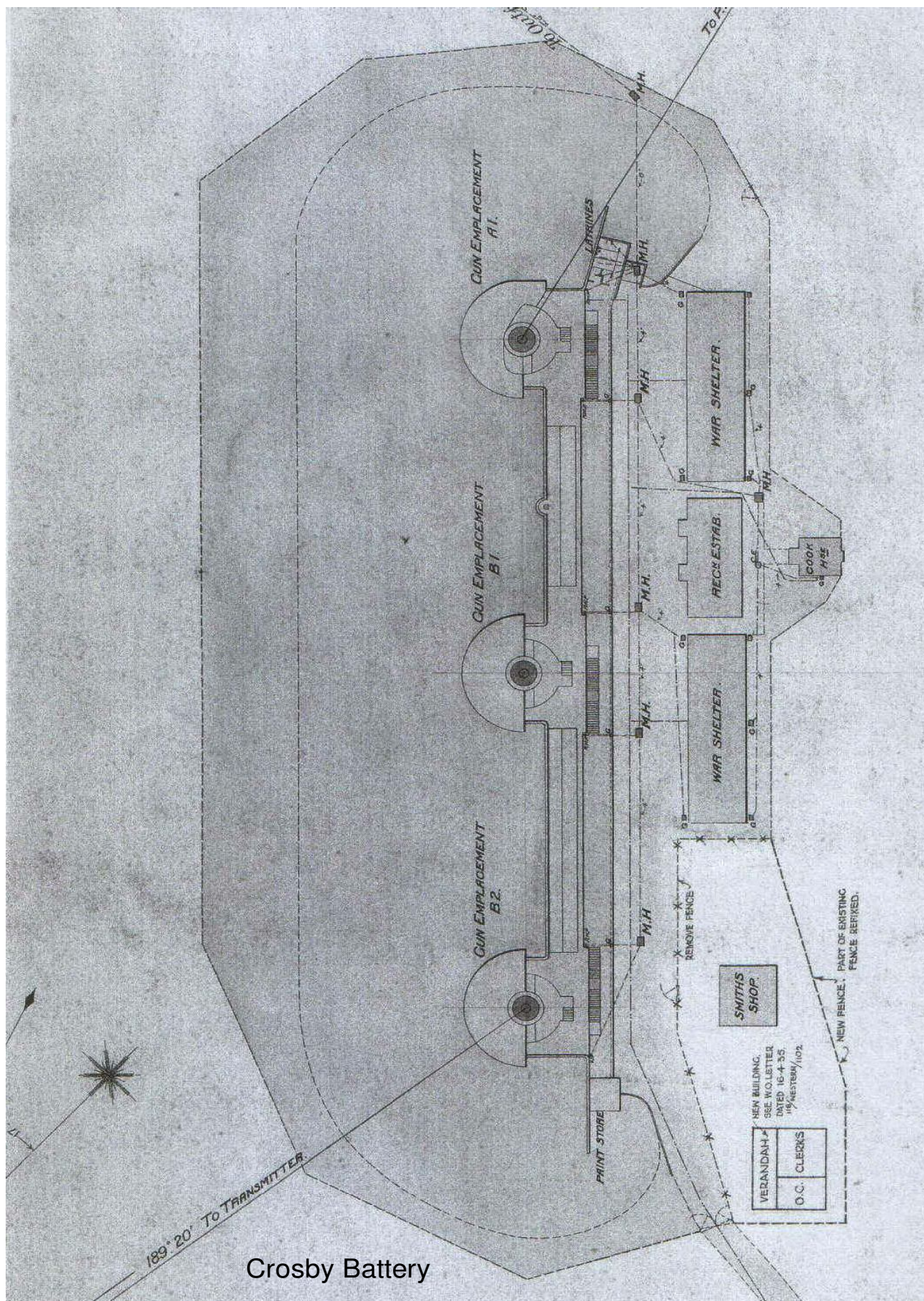
The asphalt and sand that formed the glacis for the concrete battery was removed to reveal the outline of the earlier fort and the original gun positions; the fort was made watertight as far as possible and resoration was carried out to the original gun positions and the buildings in the fort. The fort was sold by Mr Kingham to the present owners in 1997.

Crosby Battery was built in sand dunes at Crosby Point and had three emplacements forty yards apart with magazines beneath in the usual style. Behind the gun line were three buildings of which the larger two were single storey barracks whilst the small middle one was married quarters. In the battery's later years the two barrack buildings became shelters and the married quarters, a store; behind the latter building was another originally a bath house, but later converted to a cookhouse. There was a workshop behind the No 3 gun position.

Outside the immediate vicinity of the battery, there was, to the rear, the original battery observation post that was later converted to the electric light directing station. On the left flank of the battery and on the highest piece of land was the Port War Signal Station with the fire commander's post underneath. Some distance to the south were eventually four searchlight emplacements of which only two were used at any one time; behind these were four separate buildings: the caretaker's quarters, the engine house, the officers' hut and a barrack block.







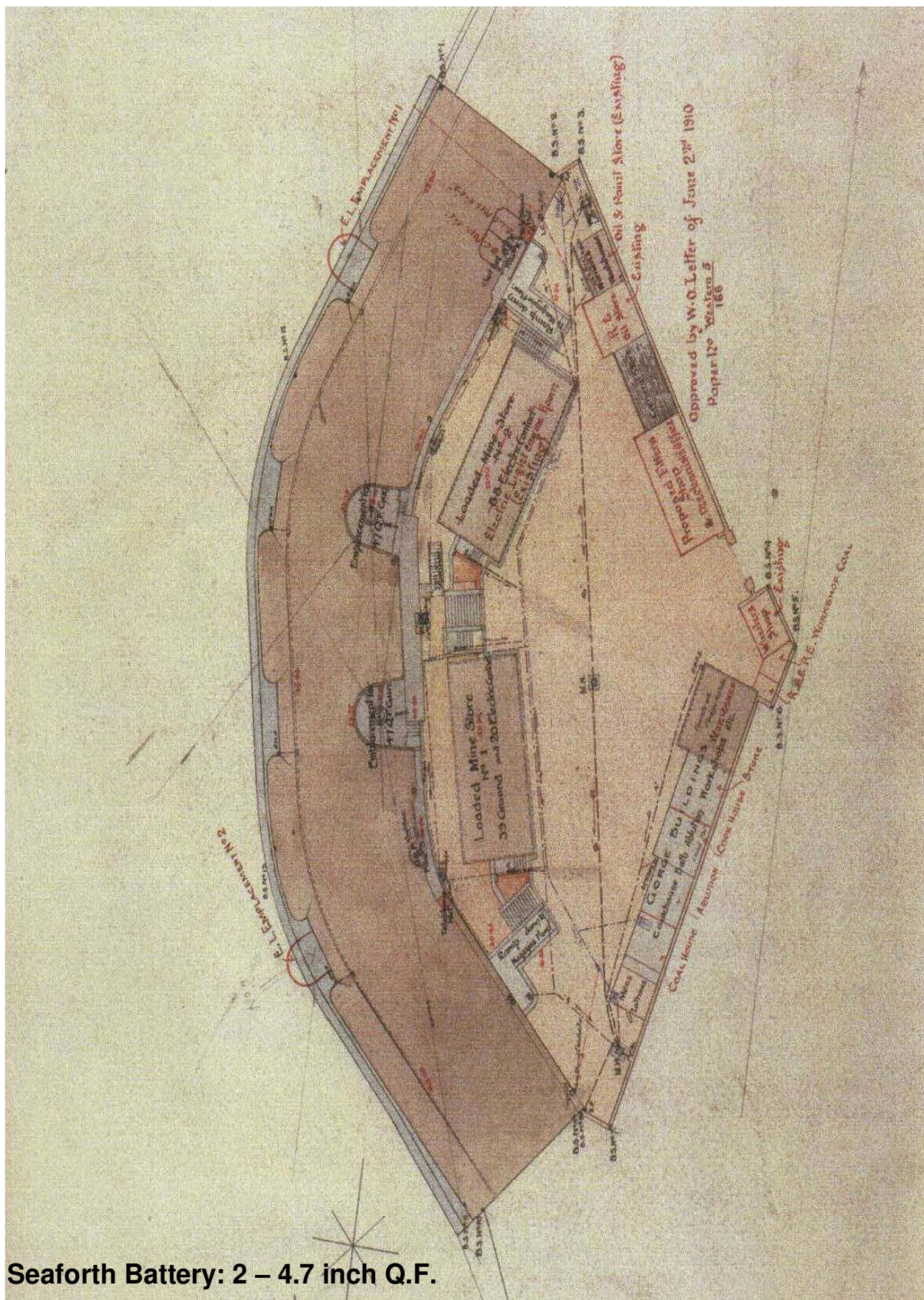
Crosby Battery

In the Second World War there was an anti-aircraft battery between the Battery and the southern searchlights. 150 yards to the north of the Battery was the second battery observation post whilst in between was where the four inch naval gun was positioned. To the north of the battery observation post were two further searchlight positions. During the Second World War the Battery developed into a sizeable position with extensive ancillary buildings.

Seaforth Battery was some four miles south of Crosby Battery on the opposite side of the river to Fort Perch Rock, the distance between them being approximately a mile. The Battery was constructed of granite in the shape of an arc with three faces; the centre face contained two casemates whilst the left and right faces had one casemate each; all four casemates had armoured shields through which the guns fired. Behind the casemates was a level platform that provided the rear access to them and from where steps led down to the magazines underneath, where each of the 12.5 inch R.M.L. guns had its own cartridge and shell store; at either end was an artillery store. When the 4.7 inch Q.F. guns were installed the shell store for the former No 2 gun position was converted into a combined shell and cartridge store for the guns. Below the rear platform were two loaded mine store buildings for the submarine mines that were stored at the Battery. When the 12.5 inch guns were removed from the casemates the No 1 and No 4 casemates were converted into searchlight positions and the right hand mine store building was turned into the engine house to operate them. The remaining two casemates, forming the front face, were converted into a lecture room and a barrack room.

The concrete positions for the Q.F. guns were built on top of the casemates, the right hand gun over the No 2 gun position and the left hand one over the No 3 position. There were two D.R.F positions, one on either side of the Q.F. battery, the right hand one was subsequently converted into a battery commander's post and electric light directing station.

The rear of the Battery was enclosed by two stretches of wall that met at the entrance; various buildings were built against each section of walling.





Fort Perch Rock



Fort Perch Rock: The Entrance



**Fort Perch Rock: Gun emplacements of the original fort.
Note the base for a 6 pdr Q.F.**



Fort Perch Rock: Gun positions of the original fort



Fort Perch Rock: No 1 emplacement for 6 inch gun



Fort Perch Rock: No 2 and No 3 emplacements for 6 inch guns

The survivor of the Mersey defences is Fort Perch Rock which is built of red sandstone and is complete. Over the entrance to the Fort is the Royal cipher of George IV¹⁹ splendidly depicted in colour which can be seen from the ramp leading up to the entrance; on either side of which can be seen the horizontally shaped loopholes of the barracks that closed the gorge between the two towers. Inside, over the entrance to the fort is a tablet²⁰ set into the stonework that reads:-

By Order of the Master General and Board of Ordnance Perch Rock Battery				
Expense	Estimate	£27583	0s	8d
	Actual Cost	£26965	6s	8d
Date of	Commencement	31 st March 1826		
	Completion	30 th April 1829		

Superintendent by Captain Kitson Royal Engineers

Immediately inside the fort is a small parade ground and the concrete emplacements for the three six inch guns and their underground magazines; any mantlets that there may have been over the No 1 and No 3 gun positions have not survived. The barrack between the two towers is used for a number of purposes as it did over the years when in military use.

After the smooth-bore guns had been removed from each tower a depression range finder pillar was built on each in connection with the three six inch guns on hydropneumatic mountings. During the First World War an observation post was built on the top of the east tower and later a searchlight position was added; at the same time a series of hutments were built on top of the barracks but these have now gone. In the Second World War a concrete radar and observation tower was built on top of the west tower. When Mr Kingham had the glacis in front of the six inch gun positions removed it revealed the positions for the old muzzle loading guns together with the original magazine; quite how much of the latter structure survives is conjectural though it could survive complete as it appears to have been included wholesale into the first six inch battery; also revealed is the thickness of the six inch gun positions which is sometimes taken for granted. The old gun positions were reached from ramps at the north-west and north-east angles, the guns fired through embrasures and a number of these have been restored. The two gun positions on the eastern face do not survive having been covered in concrete when the six inch guns were installed however the iron searchlight positions at the north-eastern corner do. On the western face the gun positions survive complete and in one position are the remains of the base for the 6 pdr Q.F. Nordenfelt installed in the First World War. The fort is an interesting visit though there is a somewhat melancholy air about the place.



Liscard Battery: Entrance Gateway



Liscard Battery: Carnot Wall



Liscard Battery: Officers Water Closet Turret

Approximately three quarters of a mile down the promenade from Fort Perch Rock there is a public park known as The Magazines; adjacent to it on the opposite side of the road is a battlemented gateway with the date 1858²¹ over the entrance which reveals that it is Liscard Battery which survives in outline only. The Battery consisted of an upper battery for four guns and a lower one for three guns separated by an underground magazine; against the south wall were the barracks, stores and cookhouse, now all gone, though the wall does survive in short lengths. Inside where the gun positions were, are a detached house and two pairs of semi-detached ones. The wall along the west side, parallel with the road, survives complete as does the turret at the north-west corner. Along the front of the battery the carnot wall survives for much of its length though in places there needs to be some clearance of the partial backfill; there is a gap where the former life-boat house used to be, then the carnot wall continues to the north-east turret which was used as a urinal. It is difficult to gage how much of the eastern wall survives as it is obscured by vegetation however the south-east turret survives which was used as the officers' water closet, altogether a surprising and interesting survivor.

Bibliography

Fort Perch Rock and The Defence of the Mersey by K McCarron
published by Merseyside Portfolios 1991

Fort Perch Rock by N Kingham (1978)

Material in the National Archives in classes WO27, 33, 44, 78, 192 & 199 and
CAB 13, 16 & 18.

Notes

1. The northern side of the river was in Lancashire, the southern side was in Cheshire, now both sides are part of Merseyside.
2. 1199 to 1216.
3. For a detailed history and description see The Castle Studies Group Bulletin No 18, 2005. It is one of the lost castles of England.
4. 5 – 24 pdrs and 3 – 12 pdrs.
5. 6 – 12 pdrs, 12 – 6 pdrs and 2 – 3 pdrs.
6. 10 – 32 pdrs and 4 – 8 inch shell guns.
7. This is where the powder from incoming armed merchant ships was stored. The site today is a public park but its previous use is still very evident.
8. Later became known as Seaforth Battery.
9. Sometimes called the Formby Channel.
10. London 16,807,032 tons and £240,978,300 respectively.
11. The battery was closed by 1894.
12. The last place dealt with was the proposed naval station at Wei-Hei-Wei in China.
13. Back in favour again!
14. Attack by unarmoured cruisers.
15. See Redan 67 October 2006

The fault does not lie with the Committee in reality but with the Royal Navy who classified the Tyne as a 'C' class port for some inexplicable reason.

16. 1 Officer, 4 sergeants and 27 other ranks
17. The Tower Armouries?
18. Died 10th September 2006.
19. 1820 to 1830.
20. Why is it that those days the fort could be built within budget? Perhaps a similar tablet could be put over one of the entrances to Fort Nelson, courtesy of the P.F.S.?
21. 18 () 58 – the middle is a capital R over a capital V.

Acknowledgements

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Fort Perch Rock: Battery for 3 – 6 inch B.L. Guns